DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 233 389 CS 207 806

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TITLE Writing Growth in Young Children: What We Are Learning from Research. The Talking and Writing Series, K-12: Successful Classroom Practices.
INSTITUTION Dingle Associates, Inc., Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC. Basic Skills Improvement Program.
PUB DATE 83
CONTRACT 300-81-0400
NOTE 22p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Basic Skills; Child Development; Child Language; *Classroom Research; *Developmental Stages; Elementary Education; *Language Acquisition; Language Experience Approach; Language Skills; Language Usage; Models; Oral Language; Writing Instruction; *Writing Processes; *Writing Research; *Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS *Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

Prepared as part of a series applying recent research in oral and written communication instruction to classroom practice, this booklet describes several classroom-based studies that have examined children's writing development and synthesizes what they have shown about the process. The first section of the booklet analyzes the term "writing development"; presents a model of literacy acquisition and use devised by J.C. Harste, C.L. Burke, and V. Woodard; and discusses the work of D.H. Graves and his associates in this area. The second section discusses children's transition from oral to written language and reviews the research conducted by M.L. King and V.M. Rentel. The third section examines how written language growth is related to teaching and discusses King's, Rentel's, and Graves' findings on instructional approaches and S. Sowers's work with the concept of scaffolding. (FL)

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Writing Growth in Young Children: What We Are Learning from Research

By Marcia Farr

The Talking and Writing Series, K-12: Successful Classroom Practices

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The purpose of this series is to provide information to assist teachers and curriculum planners at all grade levels in improving communication skills across the major disciplines.

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ED233389

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1983

CS 207806

Developed pursuant to Contract No. 300-81-0400 by Dingle Associates, Inc.

This project is funded by the United States Department of Education under Title II of the National Basic Skills Improvement Act, Public Law 95-561.

The project presented herein was developed pursuant to a contract from the United States Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the United States Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

PREFACE

During the past decade, teachers, education administrators and researchers, and the general public have become increasingly concerned about students' ability to communicate. This broad public concern for improvement in education led to the enactment of Title II, Basic Skills Improvement Act, Public Law 95-561. The Basic Skills legislation encourages Federal, State, and local education agencies to utilize " . . . all available resources for elementary and secondary education to improve instruction so that all children are able to master the basic skills of reading, mathematics, and effective communication, both written and oral." Section 209 of the act specifically authorizes the Secretary of Education to collect and analyze information about the results of activities carried out under Title II. Thus, improved instruction in the basic communication skills—speaking, listening, and writing—has become the focus of programs and research projects throughout the country.

The booklets in this series, *The Talking and Writing Series, K-12: Successful Classroom Practices*, provide information to assist teachers and curriculum planners at all grade levels to improve communication skills across all major disciplines. Developed under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education, the 12 booklets apply recent research in oral and written communication instruction to classroom practice. They contain descriptions of teaching practices; summaries and analyses of pertinent theories and research findings; practical suggestions for teachers; and lists of references and resources. Also included is a booklet on inservice training which suggests how the series can be used in professional development programs.

The booklets were developed through the efforts of an Editorial Advisory Committee comprised of 14 professionals in both the academic and research areas of written and oral communication education. The group worked with the sponsoring agency, the Department of Education's Basic Skills Improvement Program, and Dingle Associates, Inc., a professional services firm.

The committee members, in consultation with the Department of Education staff, chose issues and developed topics. Ten of the 14 committee members authored papers. The committee reviewed the papers and provided additional expertise in preparing the final booklets, which were edited and designed by Dingle Associates.

We are grateful to the committee members, advisors, and all others who contributed their expertise to the project. The committee members were:

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It is hoped that the booklets in this series will be valuable to classroom and administrative professionals in developing or restructuring their communication skills programs. They may also be useful to community and parent groups in their dialogue with members of the educational system. The ultimate benefit of this project, however, will be realized in our children's enhanced ability to communicate, both orally and in written language.

Sherwood R. Simons
Project Officer

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WRITING GROWTH IN YOUNG CHILDREN: WHAT WE ARE LEARNING FROM RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

I'm glad this classroom has lots of paper," Andrea said as she spread four clean white sheets onto her desktop. The eight-year-old slid her chair closer to the desk. "I'm going to write on this page," she explained. "Then if it's not perfect, I'll use the other pages to make it better."

Andrea bent over her desk. Her dark pixie hair covered her eyes. She wrote, then pulled back to see what she had said. Her light-blue eyes scouted the page, turning each section over in her mind. Now, with pencil poised, she works her way slowly down the page. A phrase is underlined, a detail added. Soon her page is filled with jagged lines, starred sections, and scrunched-in additions.

Over the next week, one page grew into four. On separate bits of paper, Andrea tried different descriptive paragraphs, experimented with several endings, and listed possible titles.

Andrea's progress in learning to write, and that of 15 other children, was closely observed and documented daily by researcher Donald Graves and his two research associates, Lucy Calkins and Susan Sowers. For 2 years, the researchers worked in several classrooms in a public elementary school in New Hampshire. The opening excerpt was used in an article by one of the researchers (Calkins, 1979) to illustrate that Andrea had learned, over the course of several months, crucial revising processes. That is, she had learned that her writing was changeable, something she had been unable to see a few months before. As a consequence, her writing abilities began to grow perceptibly and her final written products to improve.

I use the excerpt to show how readily accessible, and how relevant to real teaching concerns, much of the recent research on children's writing is. Andrea's behavior while writing was closely studied for patterns of writing development. Andrea's teacher's behavior also was closely studied, and her knowledge of teaching tapped, to identify patterns in effective teaching practices. The result is an abundance of information about the successful teaching and learning of writing which can be made widely available to other interested teachers. Not only is the research information relevant to daily teaching, but the language is clear and understandable to researchers and nonresearchers alike.

The work of Graves and his associates defies the traditional stereotype of educational research as being distant from the classroom and quite removed from the daily concerns of most teachers. In fact, their research is one example of a growing number of genuinely collaborative studies by teacher-researcher teams. One reason for the increase in collaborative research is the recognition by many educational researchers that teacher knowledge and behavior is an abundant source of data which can be analyzed to provide

significant findings. These findings, drawn from real-life classrooms, are readily applicable to other classroom situations.

In this booklet, I will describe a few such classroom-based studies which have been completed only recently, and attempt to synthesize what we are learning from them about children's writing. Let us first reconsider what the term, "writing development," really means.

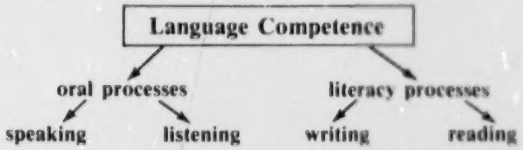
WHAT IS WRITING DEVELOPMENT?

One of the findings from recent and ongoing efforts to learn about writing development in children is that we may have to redefine what we thought we were seeking. Our traditional notion of development rests on assumptions of relatively discrete stages. Piaget, for example, provided labels for stages of mental development which explained the behavior that he was able to evoke from children. Typical, current instruction in both reading and writing seems to rest on assumptions that there are subskills that children must learn before they are able to comprehend or produce a whole language product; that is, there are definable stages which they must pass through to reach the ultimate goal of literacy. However, language is not learned or used in such discrete chunks, as other subject matter areas—math, for example—may be. Language is learned and used "all of a piece," so to speak, i.e., in a holistic fashion. It is true that toddlers do not speak like adults, that children cannot read and write texts that adults read and write. However, they are not using subcategories of adult models. As Harste, Burke, and Woodward (1982) have shown, they are *doing* what we do, but with different data. They learn language processes, then progressively feed more and more information into the processes.

Language processes can be defined simply as what people *do* with language. If we define language as the system of knowledge (with both individual and cultural variation) which speakers of a given language share, then we can say that language processes are what people do with that system. That is, they may speak it, they may listen to (and understand) it, they may read it, and they may write it. Of course, there are both similarities and differences between and among all four of these language processes. Their acquisition is similar in that learners seem to begin by trying out the processes, first. Then they use those processes to learn the appropriate forms of language. For example, babies begin acquiring English by acting like speakers of English: Their first attempts to communicate meaning are not with exactly learned English words and fully formed sentences. With experience in the processes of speaking and listening, however, they learn increasingly sophisticated forms.

Competence in a language not only entails learning the forms of that language (e.g., sounds, words, sentences), but also encompasses learning appropriate *rules of use* for those forms. This is what sociolinguists refer to as *communicative competence*. For example, speakers must learn not only how to form interrogatives in English, but must also learn how to make requests (with varying degrees of politeness) to different audiences in various situations.

Language functions, such as request-making, are uses of language that we keep learning, often even through adulthood. Hopefully, most eventually become skillful, through experience, in a variety of language functions. Unfortunately, however, some still need to learn, for example, the subtleties of making requests or offering condolences. These explanations of language competence (including both rules for forms and rules for using those forms) and of language processes are illustrated in the following model:



The model and its explanations are provided as a context in which we can begin to understand writing development. That is, writing should be seen as a *process*, and it should be seen as a natural part of *language*, and not as an artifical extension of "real" (i.e., oral) language.

This paper does not cover in detail speaking, listening, or reading as language processes, although I do believe that the case that I will make for writing can also be made for them. Think for a moment how writing is taught (and unfortunately usually not learned well) in most elementary schools: first letters, then words, then sentences, then stories, then themes. On what information about writing development in children is this based? As far as I can determine, none. It is, instead, apparently the result of an attempt to think through from an adult logical viewpoint what would be reasonable for children to learn first. Unfortunately, in all too many cases, this prevents children from learning the *processes* into which they could feed increasingly complex pieces of data, whether they be linguistic forms, cognitive structures, or social and cultural information about the world.

Assessment information about student writing abilities (e.g., NAEP 1981) tells us that the major problem is with processes beyond the sentence level, and yet we are not teaching students—some would say not allowing them—to practice writing elaborated texts. There are, of course, exceptional schools and classrooms, and some researchers are studying these exceptions to a typically dismal picture. This booklet details some findings from several of these studies. The findings are being confirmed across studies, and therefore seem to be highly significant. Because this information is emerging on a staggered and ongoing basis, I will confine my discussion to four key studies: those by Harste, Burke, and Woodward; King and Rentel; Graves; and Staton. Like language and literacy processes, my analysis will grow as I feed more research findings into my synthesis.

A key finding from Harste, Burke, and Woodward's work with 3- to 6-year-olds is that there seems to be *process universals* in literacy events. That is, the researchers began to see that 3-year-old children were engaging in the same literacy processes that adults use. They are grateful that they videotaped

the experiments with the children because toward the end of data collection, they began to see the raw data with new eyes. Thus, they were able to re-analyze the raw data. The process universals which the 3- to 6-year-olds used knowledgeably, and which are not outgrown but maintained and used in all literacy events, are: textual intent, negotiability, using langauge to fine-tune language, and risk-taking. They comprise a model of literacy acquisition and use which acknowledges that meaning resides in context, and is negotiated in context.

Textual intent

This strategy as defined by Harste, Burke, and Woodward entails "not only an expectation that written language makes sense, but also includes a 'shape' of what that sense is going to be like (p. 49)." That is, a literacy user expects both 1) that print will carry meaning (sometimes this is referred to as "semantic intent") and 2) that meaning will be carried in a particular form which one has learned to expect from previous experience. The expected form may include the kind of print, the semantic or syntactic structure of print, or the lexical form of print. The figure on the following page (Harste, Burke, and Woodward, 1982, p. 51) shows that children as young as 3 already have learned to expect meaning from print and also that different literacy activities follow different forms of structures.

As can be seen, children's responses in story dictation are different from their responses in reading a piece of environmental print. Their "textual shapes" are different. Although the responses are not as exact or fully formed as adult responses would be (e.g., the stories do not have a complete adult structure), it is not difficult to decide which set of responses occurred in story dictation. This shows that children as young as 3 can differentiate forms appropriate for various literacy activities.

Negotiability

This strategy seems to be a process universal in literacy use. Negotiation refers to the shifts made by literacy users (readers and writers) in interpreting or transmitting text. That is, in a *literacy event*—which involves both a writer and a reader—shifts are made by the participants which create the meaning in that context. For example, the children in the Harste, Burke, and Woodward study frequently moved across communication systems in an attempt to respond to a writing task assigned to them by the researchers. That is, they frequently used art, as well as what they knew of writing, to accomplish a task. They coped with a difficult task by renegotiating it to a level which made sense to them. This strategy not only allowed them to "keep going" with a particular task, but also to continue learning written language.

Using language to fine-tune language

This strategy often involves parallel uses of what one knows about language (oral *and* written) to produce new written language. For example, children learn how stories are typically organized (e.g., setting, initiating event, at-

Same Child Response to Environmental Print and Language Experience Story Tasks: The Shape of Things to Come (3-year-olds)	
Environmental Print Responses	**Language Experience Story Responses**
Don't know Eggs Ronald McDonald Coke Toothpaste Burger Chef	That tree. I'm going to fall down. Block. Boy. That a boy. Block. Tree
A thing A cup Eggs A cup Toothbrush A Burger King Cup	A spoon. A spoon to eat. There's a string. You put it round your neck like this.
Don't know Eggs McDonalds Coke Toothpaste Burger Chef	This is a box. A car. A candle. A string.

tempt, consequence, response) from hearing stories. The stories that they hear may be oral ones which are told to them, or they may be written ones which are read to them. Children use what they have learned about organizational structures of stories when they begin to write their own stories. The more they use language, the more they learn about language; and the more they learn about language, the more linguistic data they have to work with. With increasing amounts of linguistic data to use, and with experience in coordinating the data to produce new language, children become increasingly sophisticated language users. That is, they experience (oral and written) language growth.

Risk-taking

This strategy is closely related to the other three. Risk-taking allows the language user to try out a new way of using written language to test whether or not the new way works in a particular context. Children use both what they already know about written language and also what they do not quite yet know, but suspect. In this way, they are able to test their most recent insights, often simply "pretending" to write, in order to learn more about literacy. Harste, Burke, and Woodward give the example of Dawn doing precisely this:

On a task assigned to solicit name writing on two occasions so that we might study the stability of the child's marking, Dawn used two different markings. In the first instance, she wrote her name quite clearly, DAWN, and in the second instance she wrote it in an English-like cursive script. When asked if she had put her name on the later paper she said, "Yes," pointing to the line where she had announced she was going to write it in the first place. Knowing how to simply write one's name isn't good enough. Dawn already knows that. She now must try it a new way showing us that she is aware of the different options available to her.

These four process universals help define a new conception of development. They negate the traditional notion of discrete stages, supporting, instead, the concept of "learning how to mean," in Halliday's (1977) phrase, first, and then incrementally refining one's language, or writing, through experience. Harste, Burke, and Woodward argue against confusing growth with experience. That is, one learns language through language experience, and writing through writing (and other language) experiences. There do not seem to be "natural" stages which unfold in the child apart from real-world experiences. Whereas we previously looked for age-correlated developmental stages, we now see that there is little evidence to support such an expectation. This may be why findings from all four of these key writing research projects stress that *individual variation* in learning to write is the rule, not the exception.

Like Harste, Burke, and Woodward, Graves and his research associates (Calkins and Sowers) define as one of their key findings the "unearthing of process ingredients." They, too, see the processes as universal ones for both children and adults. Children reveal them more easily because the processes are still overt in children, rather than covert, as they are in many adult writers. In Harste's words, they are "unfrozen" in children, and are therefore perhaps more accessible to investigation. The essential ingredients of writing which Graves et al. identified are topic choice, rehearsal (conscious or unconscious), composing, reading, and revising. Their data show no set order to these processes within the writing of a piece. They occur recursively and in differing orders from writer to writer, and within one writer writing different products. These findings underscore the theme of individual variation in both writing and learning to write which is echoed throughout all four writing research projects

Graves et al. have identified what they call "general developmental sequences" which the children in their study seemed to go through as they learned to write. However, they caution that "great care must be taken to view them along several axes" rather than along the lines of any one behavior. As these children grew as writers, they did not "reach stages," mastering one aspect of writing at a time, then moving to a "higher level" aspect of writing. Rather, they began practicing the processes immediately at the beginning of first grade, gradually moving on a number of axes toward increasingly complex and elaborated pieces of writing. Graves, like Harste, Burke,

and Woodward did not find age correlated with growth in these processes. Instead, growth seemed to occur as a result of experience with writing. There was such variation in ages at which various aspects of writing were learned that, again, it seems clear that we cannot expect biological "stages" to unfold.

TRANSITION FROM ORAL TO WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Many of the projects' key findings focus on the theme of a transition from oral to written language. This is not to say that writing develops solely from an oral language base. There are other significant sources from which writing can grow. The relationship of art, or drawing, and writing is one of these which is increasingly being investigated. Play behavior and the development of symbol systems in general are other sources. Certainly, reading (or being read to) and the exposure to environmental print is another significant source. Having acknowledged the multiple sources which contribute to development of writing, I would like to focus on what has been learned about the relationship of one of them, oral language, to growth in writing.

King and Rentel gathered language data in three modes of discourse: story retellings, dictated stories, and written stories. Children from grades K-2 in two different schools provided the data; one population was followed from kindergarten to first grade, and the other population from first grade to second grade. Thus, they were able to track the children's growth in the three modes of discourse over the first 2 years of school. One of their key findings confirmed that "learning to write has its roots deep in oral language development." Elements of the children's writing retraced elements of earlier growth. That is, patterns of growth evidenced in the oral retellings appeared later in dictated stories, and then in the children's writing. This was true mainly for both the researchers' analysis of cohesion and analysis of story structure in these oral and written texts. This remarkable information about writing development confirms what many have long sensed: Their analysis provides concrete examples of particular features of language development (e.g., the use of conjunctions) which develop first in oral language, and then in writing.

Another interesting point is that their data—like the data of Harste, Burke, and Woodward, and Graves—show patterns of incremental growth, a gradual adding of information into processes already underway. Their data, like the others, also show extensive individual variation in development.

Staton and her associates also have provided information about the transition from oral to written language. Because the writing in the dialogue journals which comprise their data is *interactive*, i.e., it is a written year-long conversation between students and teacher, the journals may provide a useful pedagogical step between oral dialogues and written monologues. Also, there are strong parallels between the conditions for dialogue journal writing and natural conditions for first language acquisition. This may be particularly true in the apparent use of scaffolding by the teacher in dialogue journals and by the mother, or caretaker, in first language acquisition. (More detailed information about scaffolding is presented in the final section of this booklet, including the question of the relationship of written language growth to teaching.)

Another way in which dialogue journals parallel oral language development is the focus on "learning how to mean," first by immediately practicing *processes*, then refining those processes by incorporating increasingly detailed and complex pieces of information into the processes. Finally, as Shuy (1982) has pointed out, there are interesting relationships between the language functions used orally and the language functions used in dialogue journal writing. We do not know at this point whether or not there are developmental trends in oral language which are later retraced in dialogue journal writing (as in the King/Rentel data), but it would be interesting to pursue that line of analysis.

Graves et al., with their observational data of children *during* the writing process, have shown clear transitions from oral to written language. Graves has tentatively defined three "stages" that many young writers pass through when learning to write. Furthermore, he has linked some of the transition factors with what professional writers, appropriately enough, call "voice." His three stages are: 1) overt manifestations of speech while writing (sometimes these are verbal, sometimes they are "sound effects," and sometimes they are nonverbal kinesics); 2) page explicit transitions (e.g., heavy use of prosodics in writing—exclamation points, underlined or large words for stress); and 3) speech features implicit in text (e.g., information selected for the text is organized so that it flows like speech; also, heavy use of prosodics through punctuation, and capitalization drops off).

Although Graves has tentatively identified these processes as "stages," he cautions against applying them too rigidly. In fact, he reports that "*individual exceptions* to the data increased in dominance as the study progressed." He underscores this theme by recommending against developing scope and sequence curricula for classroom writing instruction because there is simply too much variability between and within children to allow for this. In fact, he shows how this variability is linked to teaching through the use of context. Instead of developing writing curricula, his findings support providing teachers with information (such as these studies provide) so that they may use it to draw out of each child the curriculum, which he sees as being within the child. This concept leads to the final section of this booklet which focuses on the relationship of written language growth to teaching.

HOW IS WRITTEN LANGUAGE GROWTH RELATED TO TEACHING?

There are three aspects of the relationship of growth in writing to teaching. The first is the overall instructional approach to literacy in a particular classroom or school, not a particular pedagogical technique. The second and third aspects of the relationship (scaffolding and text ownership) do involve specific pedagogical techniques within a broader instructional approach.

Overall instructional approach

King and Rentel and associates worked in two schools which at first ap-

pear to be quite similar. One is in a suburban upper-middle class setting; it is the "open learning" alternative school which is located next to its traditional elementary school counterpart. Parents in this section of the suburb have the choice of sending their children to the traditional elementary school or to the newer alternative school. The other school is an inner-city "magnet" school which is also organized according to "open learning" concepts. Parents from other parts of the city also have the opportunity to choose this school for their children, and enough middle-class parents have done so to provide King and Rentel with a middle-class population for their study.

Despite the apparent similarities between the two "open learning" schools, however, it became clear during the study that the overall instructional approaches to literacy teaching were different. The suburban school integrated reading and writing in almost all learning activities. Moreover, the school's classrooms were "literacy rich"; stories and books were constantly being used for reading and writing activities. The inner-city school, in contrast, relied heavily on workbooks and worksheets to teach "skills" (i.e., word recognition, handwriting, and spelling). Thus, reading and writing were treated as separate subject areas, rather than as integral parts of other content areas.

These different overall instructional approaches seem to have made distinct differences in writing growth in two populations of middle-class children. Predictably, those with more exposure to literature and more practice with the processes than the mechanical skills of writing led the way developmentally on a number of different measures (e.g., higher proportions of conjunction and lexical cohesion in their written tests).

The overall instructional approaches in the classrooms in which Graves and his associates worked match more closely the "literacy rich" classrooms than the "skills-based" classrooms of the King and Rentel study. In fact, the interaction between the Graves researchers and the teachers at this particular school produced not only a truly collaborative study, but also an evolution in the way writing was taught. According to Sowers (1982):

> **The climate of experimentation allowed teachers to test their implicit theories of learning and new approaches to teaching. They articulated discoveries and reorganized classroom time and materials.**

Although there was no uniformity in teaching styles among the classrooms, there were underlying similarities which allow us to generalize some conclusions from the study. First, the teachers created situations which permitted students to write without teacher assignments. For example, one teacher equipped a writing table with a variety of paper, pens, and pencils. Then she asked her first-grade students to write, and reorganized the classroom to allow each day for individual, small-group and whole-class responses to the writings. Soon, all the students were writing and reading other students' writing (Giacobbe, 1982). In fact, the teacher soon stopped using basal readers, and turned to the many "books" produced in her class.

Crucial to this "writing without teacher assignments" was the teacher's decision to allow what has been called "invented spelling" (Read, 1975). Expecting conventional, correct spelling from such beginning writers is unrealistic. And if the children wait until they are good spellers before they begin to write, they lose valuable time during which they could be learning writing *processes*. This particular teacher decided to encourage writing, without teacher assignments and with invented spelling, at the beginning of first grade. She learned three things by doing this: Her students learned to read at least as well as they would have with basal readers (as evidenced by standardized tests at the end of the year); they learned to write better than they would have with her previous skills-based approach (as evidenced by the pieces of writing her children produced); and their learning of skills did not ultimately suffer. Skills were learned primarily in context; that is, as students wrote, they discovered needs for different kinds of punctuation, capitalization, and other mechanical aspects of writing.

On this last point, some discussion may be needed. Advocating a process approach to writing instruction does not mean eliminating skills instruction. It is not an either/or question: Should skills or processes be taught? Both. What the Graves study revealed, however, is that skills seem to be best taught in context—that is, during process instruction. Often, such skills instruction occurs during teacher-student conferences.

Scaffolding

Conferences are characteristic of the second aspect of the relationship of written language growth to teaching, called "scaffolding." According to Cazden (1981):

> **A scaffold is, literally, a temporary framework for construction in progress. Metaphorically, the term "scaffold" was first used by Jerome Bruner to refer to adult assistance to children's language development.**

Sowers (1982) has taken the concept of instructional scaffolding and has applied it to the writing conferences which she observed during the 2 years that she worked on the Graves study. Sowers observed that these conferences were the most significant instructional aspect of writing in the classrooms, and saw in them a model of internalization for learning writing. That is, because the children "heard their own and others' writing read and questioned," they were able "to internalize the qualities of good writing and the voice of an audience with high expectations." The conferences, in which writing was shared, included both formal and informal peer-peer and teacher-student conferences. Teacher-student conferences were of three types: one-on-one, teacher with a small group, or teacher with the entire class. As students became familiar with the predictable routines of these conferences, they seemed to internalize the model, asking themselves the questions that they had learned to expect in conferences. This internalization is captured in the following words of a second-grader named Hillary (Sowers, 1982):

"I have an individual conference with myself," Hillary, a second-grader, explained. When Graves asked her to tell what she did in her solitary conferences, she told him she read the piece and thought of questions the other children would ask. She gave him an example from her current book, "On the Farm:" 'Your horse's name is Misty. Well, do you ride it or feed it or what?' So I'm going to put, 'I ride her every day unless it is raining.' "

Hillary had learned to anticipate a reader's reaction to her writing, and to accommodate this anticipated reaction during the original drafting of the piece. She was able to do this because the conferences all followed a consistent pattern. In this consistency, and in other characteristics, conferences are similar to mother-infant interactions during first language acquisition. Sowers identified 10 ways in which the principles underlying mother-infant interactions during language acquisition are characteristic of the writing conferences that she observed. Writing conferences worked to:

- focus the child on the task;
- reduce degrees of freedom (i.e., only a limited number of issues were dealt with in any one conference);
- maintain the direction of the task (i.e., each conference served to move the writer along the global writing process toward completion of the piece);
- mark critical features (i.e., the limited number of issues dealt with in each conference were chosen on the basis of their criticalness at that point in the writing process);
- control frustration (e.g., the teacher provided help *during* the writing process, rather than after a piece was completed);
- demonstrate solutions (e.g., teachers waited until a child presented a problem, and then modeled its solution);
- limit and make familiar the semantic domain (e.g., since children chose their own topics, they wrote about content familiar to them, rather than about topics outside their own knowledge base);
- offer a structure in which utterances can be inserted (i.e., a predictable interaction structure in which new content can be inserted);
- provide reversible roles (e.g., just as mother and infant can exchange roles in the interaction, a child can become the "teacher" for another child, or for himself or herself); and

- provide a playful atmosphere (i.e., one in which children feel free enough to innovate).

In these ways, the writing conferences described in the Graves study provide a model of learning which closely parallels oral language acquisition: Both cases epitomize the concept of scaffolding. Another study by Staton (1982) yielded a similar model of internalization through scaffolding.

Staton and her associates identified clear patterns of instructional scaffolding in written interaction between students and teacher in the dialogue journals that they studied. Students in this sixth-grade class made nearly daily entries in dialogue journals during the entire academic year; the teacher responded in writing in the journal to each student entry. The result is a year-long, written conversation between student and teacher which represents what appears to be a very effective model for learning writing.

The teacher uses dialogue journals with her students (and has done so for 20 years) to develop a more personal relationship with each student. She hopes to "break down the communication barriers" between teacher and students so that she can then teach them. It is apparent, however, that she is accomplishing far more than "clearing the way" for teaching. Many learning patterns are evident to a careful reader of these journals, including a clear pattern of written language growth. This growth, or learning, seems to occur partly as a result of the "scaffolding" which the teacher provides in her responses. The responses often provide a model of reasoning about a student-identified problem which, by example, extends the student's competence, both in writing and in thinking. The example below, from an analysis by Farr (1982), shows how the teacher leads one student through such a model of reasoning. This student could virtually speak no English when she began the school year; by December or January, she was writing English fluently and effectively.

Example of Written Dialogue:

Student	*Teacher*
You kow Debora call me (B)	**When someone calls you names or uses bad language you can move away. Ignore them, play like you did not hear them. They will not stop if they think they are making you angry.**
You can tell Debbie the not sei bed worr	**I've told Debbie not to use bad words. She says she doesn't use them. Around me she doesn't use them. Around you she uses them to show off.**

Student	*Teacher*
Ms Reed Debbie use de but she sed no cas she sharr	**Of course Debbie would say "No." She does not want to get into trouble.**
Ms Reed I think Debbie af to not sei nothing like bad wors because is not good.	**Debbie wants friends but she says bad words so she does not have many friends.**

The patterns in such teacher responses during the year support the notion that the teacher, consciously or unconsciously, is providing scaffolding when it is most needed by the student. The teacher uses responses to get the student writing, reasoning, and elaborating on topics the student has initiated. When the student is doing these things, the teacher begins to reduce the number of responses, thus gradually dropping the scaffolding as it is less needed by the student.

I have discussed two aspects of the relationship of written language growth to teaching. The first was the overall instructional approach in a particular classroom or school (what has been called either "literacy-rich" or "skills-based"). The second aspect was scaffolding, first defined as a concept, and then in terms of how particular pedagogical techniques manifested the concept (e.g., writing conferences and dialogue journals). A third aspect of the relationship of written language growth to teaching is text ownership.

Text ownership

This concept, first used by Harste, Burke, and Woodward (1982), essentially means that the meaning in any literacy event is created by the participants in that event. That is, a writer creates meaning when writing to a reader, and a reader creates meaning when reading the writer's work.

The four process universals which Harste, Burke, and Woodward have identified (and which have been explained above) support the concept of text ownership in both literacy use and in literacy acquisition. In other words, the strategies of textual intent, negotiability, using language to fine-tune language, and risk-taking all assume a kind of *control* on the part of the literacy user. The reader and the writer create and negotiate meaning; it does not reside purely within the written text. Pedagogically, this concept is manifested in the teaching approaches used in both the Graves and the Staton study.

In the Graves study, the heart of the writing instruction program was in the conference process. Because teachers and students, together, worked their way through the writing of each piece by sharing the writing (in various stages) in conferences, the learning and teaching of writing was paced. This pacing allowed time for writers to field questions by readers, and to use these questions in considering revisions. In this way, both the particular piece of writing and, more importantly, the learning of writing processes were nurtured. Use of such conferences also resulted in a sense of ownership of the writing by

the children. As one teacher said (Calkins, 1980):

> **I used to try to shortcut things by assigning topics and correcting papers, but now I find that when children choose their own topics and revise their papers based on their own decisions, they really care about their writing. It belongs to them.**

Whereas teachers can help by carefully listening, questioning, and suggesting, the responsibility for selecting topics, creating drafts, and making revisions lies with the student. Previously, the teachers in this study, like many teachers, used up energy in doing many of these things. With the writing conference process, that use of energy was shifted to the child. When the child feels that kind of control, he or she has a sense of *text ownership* and, consequently, readily provides the energy and motivation needed to do the best writing.

A sense of text ownership is also manifested in the dialogue journals of the Staton study. The journals belong to the students; they are private, written conversations between each student and the teacher. (Students whose journals were studied, however, gave permission to the researchers to use them.) Students almost always initiated discussion of topics, and each student determined what and how much he or she would write about each topic. As in the Graves study, the teacher's role was to listen, ask questions, and make suggestions. Also, as in the Graves study, the student had responsibility for, and therefore control of, almost all aspects of the writing process. As a result, real growth, or learning, occurred. Students no longer felt compelled simply to "write something" on a topic chosen by someone else—a process which often results in both lackluster and poor writing. In contrast, the writing in these journals is what can be called "engaged" writing; it is full of voice and original meaning. That this kind of writing results from the fact that the writers feel a sense of ownership of the writing may be best summed up by a quote from one of the student dialogue journal writers (who was struggling not only to learn to write but also to learn English). After a particularly long and expressive entry in which she introduced 12 new topics, and elaborated on each of them, this student wrote:

> **Today I like to write a lot I donth know way meaybi cos I got somenithing to write.**

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